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VELVET BEAN (*Mucuna utilis*).

The velvet bean is an annual legume resembling in a general way the running varieties of cowpeas. The vines attain a great length, becoming from 10 to 20 feet or more long. Both the vine and seeds make excellent feed for animals. Owing to the dense cover that it makes the velvet bean is a splendid legume for crowding out weeds. As a soil renovator it is equal to cowpeas. It is adapted only to the Gulf States and thrives best in sandy soil. As a green manure crop in orchards velvet beans have been used quite largely, but owing to their habit of climbing the trees are somewhat objectionable.

Seeding.—Velvet beans should be planted in late spring when the ground is thoroughly warm. In Florida the seed is commonly sown in rows 4 feet apart, dropping 2 to 4 seeds every 2 feet. Farther north they should be planted more thickly. Drilled in rows 5 feet apart, 2 pecks will seed an acre, planting the seeds 6 inches apart in the rows. When broadcasted a bushel or more is necessary.

Harvesting.—Velvet beans yield about the same quantity of hay per acre as the largest varieties of cowpeas. In Florida two cuttings may be obtained, but farther north only one. Owing to the very viny habit of the plant, mowing is rather difficult, necessitating the use of special devices. The yield of seed is from 20 to 25 bushels per acre. No effort thus far has been made to secure better varieties of this plant by seed selection. It is probable that great improvement can be made in this way.



